

Chapter No. 2091
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***HOUSE
CONCURRENT RESOLUTION
No. 122***

Originated in House



Clerk

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 122

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION COMMENDING AND CONGRATULATING ERICKA M. WHEELER FOR BEING NAMED A 2016 RHODES SCHOLAR AND BECOMING THE FIRST AFRICAN-AMERICAN FEMALE IN MISSISSIPPI TO RECEIVE THE PRESTIGIOUS AWARD.

WHEREAS, Ericka M. Wheeler, a senior at Millsaps College, was recently named a 2016 Rhodes Scholar, making her the first African-American woman in Mississippi to receive the prestigious scholarship, an incredible, historical accomplishment for African-American women in Mississippi; and

WHEREAS, the Rhodes Scholarship, which began in 1902, provides an extraordinary opportunity for immaculate scholars such as Ericka to pursue the post-graduate studies of their dreams at one of the finest educational institutions in the world without the distraction of monetary woes, as the scholarship provides an all-expense paid course of study; and

WHEREAS, Ericka embodies each of the criteria established in the will of Cecil Rhodes, including academic excellence, a commitment to making a strong difference for good in the world, a

concern for the welfare of others and a conscious knowledge of inequities, making her an extremely suitable and well-deserved recipient of one of the world's oldest and most celebrated international fellowships awarded to 32 students throughout the United States and only 83 students total; and

WHEREAS, the fifth of seven children, Ericka attended Greenwood Public Schools until the 11th grade, but as the daughter of Greenwood doctors Harold Wheeler and Valencia Martin and the sister of three medical school students, she transferred to the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science in Columbus, Mississippi, to participate in the strenuous and challenging curriculum appropriate for a future medical professional; and

WHEREAS, a double major in history and English, Ericka credits her academic success to the encouragement of her parents, who not only stressed the importance of succeeding in the classroom but also the more important lessons that one receives outside the classroom, and she truly believes that her tenure in the Greenwood Public School System enabled her to connect to the underserved and better understand their daily struggles, something that no classroom or textbook can teach; and

WHEREAS, when choosing a college, Ericka selected Millsaps College in Jackson, Mississippi, because of its humble character and intimate, yet reputable stature, so that she would be more than just an enrollment statistic and actually make lifelong friendships and educational connections with her professors and

fellow classmates, a decision that has truly paid off, as it was her academic advisor and history professor, Robert McElvaine, that not only encouraged her to apply for the Rhodes Scholarship but also altered the way she viewed the world, herself and her academic career; and

WHEREAS, as a freshman at Millsaps College, Ericka had a clear path to follow for completing her educational and career goals: major in chemistry, graduate in three years, enter medical school and return to Greenwood to practice medicine; but, when the mandated core curriculum at Millsaps required her to take classes that were outside her entrenched schedule, she found herself sitting in Sex and Religion in Prehistory, and as she intently listened to the lectures of Professor McElvaine, the academic agenda she had imagined for herself began to change; and

WHEREAS, Professor McElvaine's inquisitive approach to teaching as well as the intriguing subject matter on which he lectured forced Ericka to re-assess herself as a person and her purpose for existing, and the profound impact she experienced through the class and the several other classes that Professor McElvaine taught prompted her to change her major from chemistry to history, declare a second major in English and extend her stay at Millsaps from her planned three years to a full four years; and

WHEREAS, even though her educational aspirations have considerably shifted since her freshman days, one facet of her life plan that remains steadfast is her desire to study medicine

and become a physician, something that, despite the wishes of others, she had not envisioned for herself at first but became passionate about after witnessing her grandmother care for her grandfather, who suffered from Alzheimer's disease; and

WHEREAS, while she was originally interested in the research aspect of medicine, the relationship Ericka cherished with her adored grandfather refocused her into the emotional and human dimensions of illness and healing; after he passed in the summer of 2015, she combined her interests in writing and healing to conduct a series of interviews with Alzheimer's patients that she turned into short narratives to present to the patients' families to help them find comfort from reading the fond memories they shared with their loved ones, before the disease ultimately erased those times and left the family as strangers; and

WHEREAS, Ericka, a trailblazing inspiration and role model for young African-American women, following her graduation from Millsaps in May, begins her post-graduate studies at Oxford University in September 2016, and while she initially planned to study medical anthropology during her tenure at Oxford, she comprehended the reality of her very exciting educational future even though her course of study is now undecided; she realized that healing and modern medicine will be taught in medical school, but the privilege to study at Oxford University free-of-charge is a once in a lifetime opportunity that should be utilized to

broaden her horizons, discover the uncharted seas of academia and experience life like never before; and

WHEREAS, regardless of her course of study, Ericka will undoubtedly succeed during her post-graduate studies at Oxford University, a feat that will not only bring pride and glory to the City of Greenwood, Millsaps College and the State of Mississippi, but will also remarkably honor her late grandfather's memory, because despite his debilitating condition, he never forgot the copious amount of faith he had in her potential and her ability to truly make the world a happier, healthier place; and

WHEREAS, it is the policy of this Legislature to recognize and honor fine Mississippi students, such as Rhodes Scholar recipient Ericka Wheeler, who has not only achieved phenomenal academic success through her hard work and dedication but has also inspired future generations of African-American women to strive to reach their goals and achieve greatness:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, THE SENATE CONCURRING THEREIN, That we do hereby commend and congratulate Ericka M. Wheeler for being named a 2016 Rhodes Scholar, making her the first African-American female in Mississippi to receive the highly honored scholarship, and extend our sincerest wishes for continued success in all of her future endeavors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be furnished to Ericka M. Wheeler and to the members of the Capitol Press Corps.

ADOPTED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
April 15, 2016

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Philby Simon", written over a horizontal line.

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ADOPTED BY THE SENATE
April 19, 2016

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "J. To. Reese", written over a horizontal line.

PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE